



## Native Seed Project

### *-Recovery Act Projects -*

### Montezuma, Dolores & San Miguel Counties



While private landowners fight noxious weeds in sparsely vegetated lawns and overused pastures, public land managers face the uphill battle of re-vegetating large areas of disturbed land. This Recovery Act project seeks to solve these ecological challenges through the creation of a new commercial market.

The Dolores Public Lands Office spends much time, energy and funding to reclaim public lands after ground-disturbing activities (such as wildfire, oil and gas development, motorized traffic, mining, grazing, timber harvesting, fuels treatment, etc.). Past reclamation efforts that used later successional native plants in reseeding projects have met with mixed success. This project funds research of the use of earlier successional species. Plant succession is a natural process whereby a plant community, made up of species that occupy the same ecological niche, replaces another.

Thirty monitoring sites have been established on public lands, where the life cycles of target species are being monitored and their seeds collected. The seeds are sent to the USFS Bend Seed Extractory, where they are cleaned, counted and treated.

Although research indicates some reclaimed sites may indefinitely remain in a somewhat degraded state and only be capable of sustaining the pioneer species, even this would be considered a success, compared to remaining barren or being invaded by noxious weeds. On other sites, it's hoped the pioneer plants can retain and improve soils so as to accommodate later successional plants.

At the same time, an economic analysis is being conducted to find out whether the native pioneer seeds can be produced as a commercial product to be sold to both the public and private sectors for reclamation purposes. Southwest Seed, Inc. of Dolores has conducted the first test plantings and will evaluate seed yields for the next three years to determine the profitability of harvesting and marketing. If there is a sufficient seed yield next year, it will be used for a reclamation project in Canyons of the Ancients National Monument.



### *Dolores Public Lands Office Native Seeds – Recovery Act Projects continued*

Meanwhile, the BLM continues to compile data on the propagation, cultivation, harvesting and reclamation potential of seeds from the 14 hardy native plants targeted for study. The theory is that these early- to mid-successional species will better hold degraded soils together to promote native regeneration and limit establishment of noxious weeds. Some of the native plants being studied as part of the Native Seed Recovery Act Project (shown in order below) are: purple three-awn, yellow owl-clover, bulbous spring parsley, Louisiana sagewort, wild tobacco, and wooly plantain.



USFS funding will be used to help the BLM establish a Native Plant Showcase Garden to reclaim a site at the Dolores Public Lands Office (see below) to showcase the project and its results. The garden will serve as a pilot project and learning tool for researchers, land managers and the local community.



This Recovery Act project has been contracted to Southwest Seed Inc. of Dolores